United Nations E/C.19/2007/3/Add.9

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 March 2007
English
Original: Spanish

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Sixth session
New York, 14-25 May 2007
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of recommendations on the six mandated areas of the Forum and on the Millennium Development Goals

Information received from the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations**

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Summary

This report provides background information on issues concerning indigenous women's participation in governance processes and in local governments, including basic information with respect to: (a) the definition of "indigenous" and its application in the five Latin American countries covered by the study; (b) the relationship between indigenous peoples and poverty; and (c) the relationship between indigenous peoples, local governments and governance, highlighting the tensions that can arise between different concepts and practices.

With regard to political participation, the report presents an analysis of mechanisms such as quota laws and systems, their scope and problems in implementing them from the national to the local level. The analysis shows that while these mechanisms are essential, they do not redress indigenous women's low levels of representation or guarantee the exercise of their democratic rights. Rather, the scarcity and dispersion of information and analyses on this subject confirm that indigenous women are largely invisible in this sphere. In the same context, the report presents some of the ways in which indigenous peoples have reconceptualized local government and governance in the framework of their practices and customs, their traditions and the political positions of social movements and organizations.

* E/C.19/2007/1.

** The submission of the present document was delayed in order to ensure the inclusion of the most recent information.

07-25821 (E) 220307 260307

The report then addresses the issue of inter-agency coordination in terms of how indigenous women's organizations and their areas of concern are linked with a variety of external entities, and touches on certain standards, policies and experiences that have created an enabling environment for indigenous women's participation. For example, the report explores the connection between indigenous women's organizations and public and civil-society entities at the local and non-local levels, and presents reflections on the following basic questions: beyond possible isolated examples of formal coordination mechanisms and opportunities, do indigenous women's organizations show a capacity for engagement and initiative? Do external entities — such as the State, NGOs and women's organizations and movements — understand and support the positions of indigenous women? How? Are there any signs pointing to the construction of joint intercultural networks and a common political platform? The report briefly reviews these questions, starting with legislative initiatives that form a potentially enabling regulatory framework for indigenous women's participation, then giving some examples of the application of public policies to strategic issues and finally highlighting some of the specific experiences of development programmes and projects.

The report's conclusions are grouped into two categories: strengths and weaknesses of the processes and experiences analysed, and lessons learned. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses is presented in relation to two issues: (a) indigenous women's political and social participation at the local level, and (b) inter-agency coordination and public policies.

On the first issue, the main conclusion is that it is not clear that indigenous movements and organizations can succeed in systematically integrating women by altering power structures and promoting more broad-based social participation and decision-making, since indigenous women still suffer from sharp disparities with regard to equal opportunity.

On the second issue, the main conclusion is that there is a broad and diversified institutional environment that can represent an opportunity for increasing indigenous women's participation and providing more appropriate systemic responses to their demands in terms of public policies and investments.

The situation is similar at local levels of governance and in municipal governments. The larger number of women in traditional consultation and decision-making forums, the higher proportion of women in various local-government entities and the effective, constant and proactive participation of certain women leaders cannot be seen as systematic processes on a significant scale.

In order for this to be feasible, a number of conditions must be met: the first is that indigenous women and their organizations should increase their capacity to engage in dialogue and design their own agendas; the second is that external entities should be permeable, flexible and open enough to allow for genuinely horizontal, democratic and non-discriminatory processes of dialogue.

The lessons learned are grouped under four dimensions:

(a) **A focus on small-scale initiatives that can be broadened.** An alternative to large-scale bilateral and multilateral development projects for indigenous peoples is to focus on small-scale initiatives, based on sound selection and comparability criteria, that are interlinked and that can, at a subsequent stage, be substantially scaled up on the basis of the knowledge gained and the results actually achieved.

(b) **Facilitating and monitoring different initiatives with different women and men.** A key requirement is the capacity to recognize and bridge differences, while not homogenizing the women involved or the initiatives in which they participate.

(c) **Empowering indigenous women and girls at the grass-roots level.** Many development programmes and projects end up associating themselves repeatedly with the same leaders (male and female), since they already have experience and are undeniably easier to work with, making the investment more "profitable".

(d) **The urgency of innovation.** The proposals on gender issues being put forward at various levels tend to be repetitive, slow to adapt and based on expediency. It is necessary to innovate by moving beyond traditional awareness-raising and training activities, for example through apprenticeships, peer exchanges and internships that take individuals out of their own backyards and communities, and to avoid the assistance-based model that reproduces the parameters of "hard-core poverty".

Participation of indigenous women in governance processes and in local governments in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru[1]

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Main results of the review	1–51	5
	A. Brief description of the situation with regard to indigenous peoples	1–15	5
	B. Indigenous women's rights and participation	16–37	7
	C. Inter-agency coordination and public policies	38–51	11
II.	Conclusions and recommendations	52–63	14
	A. Conclusions	52–64	14
	B. Recommendations	65–71	20

[1] Summary of the original document, which can be found at http://www.un-instraw.org/participacionpolitica. For the bibliographical references, footnotes and bibliography, see the original document.

I. Main results of the review

A. Brief description of the situation with regard to indigenous peoples

1. This section provides essential background information on the issue of indigenous women's participation in governance processes and in local governments.

1. The definition of "indigenous"

2. International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries, adopted in Geneva in 1989 by the ILO General Conference, has been ratified by most of the Latin American countries (with the notable exceptions of Chile and Panama).[2]

3. Although Convention No. 169 establishes parameters for defining "indigenous", and its ratification by the countries covered in this study suggests that they take a uniform approach to the concept, in practice there is as yet no single standard or set of criteria for identifying, in censuses, the indigenous population of Latin America.

2. Indigenous peoples and poverty

4. Being indigenous increases a person's likelihood of being poor. The poverty eradication efforts of the past decade have tended to have little impact on the indigenous population, with the notable exception of those carried out in Guatemala, although illiteracy rates remain high in that country.

5. According to figures from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in 1995 there were 43 million completely illiterate people in Latin America who had no access to or mastery of the codes of reading or writing. Indigenous areas of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, like Guatemala, continued to exhibit high rates of female illiteracy.

6. The indigenous population and rural areas have made far less progress than urban areas in terms of education. Deficiencies have also been noted with respect to gender inequalities, although some progress has been made in raising women's and men's levels of schooling. The average school enrolment rates for indigenous children are low, but the rates for indigenous girls are lower by 50 per cent or more. The same is true with respect to adult literacy.[3]

7. The need to achieve equity in education has been identified. To this end, intercultural bilingual education has been proposed, among other measures. New programmes have been created to improve education quality by training teachers in and for indigenous areas. Countries that have implemented such initiatives include those with a high proportion of indigenous inhabitants, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru. Colombia, meanwhile, has included educational components in the laws it has formulated on indigenous issues. By means of such programmes, these countries have sought to achieve equity between girls and boys and to reduce poverty among indigenous people. The challenge, however, is enormous.

---

[2] See table 1 of the original document.

[3] See table 8 of the original document.

3. Indigenous peoples, local governments and governance

8. One of the principal social changes that have taken place in Latin America since the early 1980s is the emergence of indigenous movements at the local, national and international levels. Over the same period, Latin America made increasing headway with two significant political processes: democratization and decentralization. One of the indigenous movements' most important successes has been the increase in their capacity to promote and support their candidates' access to many local governments in many Latin American countries.

9. In its report "Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Citizens' Democracy", the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates that the percentage of indigenous members of lower legislative chambers or single-chamber legislatures in 2001-2002 was 0.8 per cent (1 out of 120) in Peru; 3.3 per cent (4 out of 121) in Ecuador; 12.4 per cent (14 out of 113) in Guatemala; and 26.2 per cent (34 out of 130) in Bolivia. As can be seen, these percentages are far smaller than the average percentages represented by the indigenous population of these countries.[4]

10. With access to local government, indigenous communities obtain political legitimacy and power over crucial public services and resources. Governance often improves as well, since such access tends to lead to more transparent and participatory decision-making processes. These processes include innovations such as participatory strategic planning and budgeting, people's assemblies as mechanisms of social control over elected officials, and negotiation tables to settle disputes and build consensus. Democratic control of local governments has also helped to improve governance, since it increases indigenous communities' access to information and advice regarding their legal rights and the government programmes and policies from which they could benefit.

11. It is important to note that a full understanding of the issues covered in this study must take into account the tensions and contradictions between decentralization, local government, governance and civic participation as typically defined in States and in Latin America in general, on the one hand, and the indigenous view of these same concepts, on the other, which is influenced by discussions concerning indigenous peoples' rights, customs and practices, traditional structures of indigenous organization, self-determination and autonomy.

12. On 29 June 2006, the United Nations Human Rights Council, meeting in Geneva, adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration stipulates that indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as collectives or as individuals, of all the human rights and fundamental freedoms recognized by the United Nations. It also acknowledges indigenous peoples' right to exercise self-determination and to preserve and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their rights to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the countries in which they live.

13. One of the more controversial issues is precisely that of the self-determination of indigenous peoples. Even today, many national Governments see this affirmation as a threat to national unity. What is certain is that for centuries, up to and including the present time, indigenous peoples' relationships with national Governments and

[4] See table 2 of the original document.

societies have been based on the exercise (veiled or explicit, depending on the circumstances) of their self-determination.

14. Indigenous governance is defined as indigenous peoples' sphere of authority, which, within the framework of applicable laws and of the States of which these peoples are part, and bearing in mind indigenous peoples' own forms of organization, enables them to control their own economic, social and cultural development; to manage their lands and territories in recognition of the special relationship between the territory and ethnic and cultural identity; and to participate effectively in local, subnational and national governments.

15. Indigenous systems are very much alive and active. The space and time in which they operate are parallel to those of the nation as a whole, and this sphere often remains untouched by the measures adopted by national Governments. Each indigenous people is in itself a complex, dynamic, living, changing society that constantly reincorporates values even as it differentiates itself and develops within a national society that surrounds it and that, in turn, is complex in itself and in its relationships with its partners and members.

B. Indigenous women's rights and participation

16. With regard to indigenous women's political participation, an analysis was conducted of mechanisms such as quota laws and systems, their scope and problems in implementing them from the national to the local level. The findings show that while these mechanisms are essential, they do not redress indigenous women's low levels of representation or guarantee the exercise of their democratic rights. Rather, the scarcity and dispersion of information and analyses on this subject confirm that indigenous women are largely invisible in this sphere.

1. Indigenous women's rights and citizenship

17. Given that women as a group and indigenous people as a group each have their own difficulties in exercising their rights, indigenous women are doubly disadvantaged. In examining the possible reasons for this situation, it is necessary to discuss the tensions between the different ways of conceiving and upholding universal human rights, on the one hand, and specific collective rights, on the other.

2. Gender and empowerment

18. It is impossible to speak of the participation of women, including indigenous women, without referring to the concept of empowerment. Without attempting to present an exhaustive analysis of the subject, it should be pointed out, along the lines suggested by Magdalena León, that "empowerment challenges the existing balance of power and seeks to gain more control over the sources of power. It fosters individual autonomy, stimulates resistance, promotes collective organization and encourages protest through mobilization".[5]

[5] León, Magdalena (ed.), *Poder y empoderamiento de las mujeres*, Tercer Mundo Editores, National University of Colombia Faculty of Human Sciences, Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia, first reprint, 1998.

3. Women's political participation: from the national to the local level, the near-invisibility of indigenous women

19. As a means of promoting gender equality in political participation, especially over the past decade, countries have experimented with quota laws and systems in election processes.[6]

20. In Bolivia, since 1997 political parties have been required to ensure that women make up 30 per cent of their candidates for the Chamber of Deputies and 25 per cent of their candidates for the Senate.

21. In Colombia, one such instrument is Law No. 581 of 2000, known as the Quota Act, which is intended to increase the number of women in senior positions in State entities at the national, departmental, district and municipal levels and to give them access to at least 30 per cent of government posts.

22. In Ecuador, article 102 of the 1998 Constitution provides that "the State shall promote and guarantee the equitable participation of women and men as candidates in elections for public office, in leadership and decision-making posts in the public sector, in the administration of justice, in oversight bodies and in political parties".

23. In Guatemala, the Government has reformed the Elections and Political Parties Act in compliance with its commitments under the peace agreements.

24. In Peru, Law No. 27680 reforming section IV (on decentralization), chapter XIV, of the Constitution (6 March 2002) provides that regional governments have political, economic and administrative autonomy.

25. While they serve to open up opportunities, quota laws do not, in themselves, represent a means of constructively advancing the goal of increasing the participation of marginalized groups in election processes and modifying the historical-cultural and balance-of-power dynamics that influence those processes. Although they usually yield observable quantitative results, it has been acknowledged that States and political parties must also give priority to the qualitative aspect of participation, change and women's leadership.

26. The aforementioned UNDP report indicates that, in just over a decade, the percentage of elective posts (in general and at the national level) occupied by women rose from 8 per cent to 15.5 per cent in the 18 Latin American countries studied, albeit with wide variations between countries. It is noteworthy that Bolivia, the majority of whose population is indigenous, attained the highest average participation, with a very large increase by 2002.[7]

27. The organization United Cities and Local Governments has pointed out that local levels of government offer more opportunities for women's empowerment and exert a very positive influence on their national-level participation. The countries with the most women councillors are the ones most likely to have a high percentage of women parliamentarians.

28. However, it has been posited that, with the decentralization process, more money has been channelled to municipalities, attracting the attention of political parties and leaving less room for women's political participation. This was observed

[6] See table 11 of the original document.

[7] See table 12 of the original document.

in municipal administrations in Bolivia immediately after the promulgation of the Popular Participation Act.

29. Massolo notes that "While the municipality is the level of representation and government closest to the citizenry, and deals with matters of everyday life, paradoxically it has not facilitated women's access to representative office at the municipal level [...] The local level has proved to be the least open and least favourable to women's formal participation and to the exercise of their civil rights".[8]

30. The reports considered at the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action contain relevant assessments of the factors that hinder women's political participation. Peru's report, for example, notes that "Women's lack of documentation, poverty, rural isolation and illiteracy have a direct bearing on female abstention during elections", their lack of interest in leadership, and the "risk of manipulation of women in the exercise of their civil rights".

31. Bolivia's report notes that "There are ongoing problems, such as the failure to have the gender perspective embedded in government bodies or economic development plans and programmes. In rural areas, in particular, the political and civic participation of women is another area of concern", especially since so many women lack basic documentation.

32. Ecuador's report asserts that "Women who venture into politics in Ecuador face ingrained cultural prejudices in the political parties and their leaders about women entering the world of politics, historically considered a public and therefore exclusively masculine domain".

33. The reports submitted to this 10-year review reveal some of the factors which, over and over in the different countries, are cited as obstacles to the participation of indigenous women in the political system:

(a) Lack of documentation, as a key obstacle to the exercise of civil rights, including the right to participate and to be elected in a representative democracy;

(b) Little or no access to or control of various kinds of assets, including human assets (lack of education and training), physical assets (isolation in rural areas) and social assets (weak social networks and relationships), among others;

(c) Political violence, which is particularly severe in countries such as Colombia, Guatemala and Peru, where current conflicts or the aftermath of earlier ones have resulted in large numbers of undocumented, rootless displaced persons and refugees who feel threatened and afraid to act freely, with obvious adverse effects on political participation.

34. Significantly, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in June 2006, states that indigenous peoples retain their rights to participate fully, "if they so choose", in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the countries in which they live. This points to a factor that poses a key question for any initiative intended to strengthen the participation of indigenous people (both women and men) in the dominant political systems of their countries,

[8] Massolo, Alejandra, *Participación política de las mujeres en el ámbito local*, preliminary version, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), 2006.

which by definition are distinct from the multiple traditional political systems of indigenous peoples.

4. Indigenous women's social participation in organizations and movements: from discourse to practice

35. All of the five countries under consideration have a large number of social organizations and movements that vary in form and nature. Even in countries where, at various stages of their recent history, armed conflict has broken out and Governments have tended to be authoritarian and centralizing (such as Colombia, Guatemala and Peru), the working classes in both rural and urban areas have had these forms of social capital and social networks, some of which have become more political in nature, while others have focused more on economic and production issues.

36. A brief summary of the conclusions reached on the issues under consideration reveals a number of important observations:

(a) Greater visibility and overall recognition of women in the public sphere of social life, associated with the visibility of the social movements to which they belong;

(b) Various advances in terms of the number of women participating in local forums for consultation and deliberation, and in the intensity and continuity of this participation, in the context of the democratization of decision-making processes (development councils, negotiation tables and participatory planning forums and processes in all the countries studied);

(c) Signs that new (or relatively new) issues and narratives are being introduced into the policy agenda and into investments, such as the role of indigenous women in eco-tourism initiatives in southern Mexico, or the productive and environmental challenges of women's local economic base in Cotopaxi and Cotacachi, Ecuador;

(d) Changes in the accessibility, development and interlinkage of the various assets of concern to women; for example, a generally higher level of education with regard to human capital, especially among young women; an increase in the formation of and participation in social networks; an improvement in health; and greater sensitivity to delicate issues such as domestic violence.

37. Despite these advances, there has been no simple linear progression from the achievements of social movements in a broad institutional sphere to transformation processes geared to the substantive modification of opportunities for rural populations, especially the poorest and most marginalized from society. Two dimensions can usefully be distinguished in this context.

(a) In relation to identity and difference

(i) **The ambiguous sphere of gender demands.** The strengthening of social movements and of their identities is often linked to an ethnicity- or poverty-based view;

(ii) **Universal individual rights and localized collective rights.** Tensions may arise between citizens' specific, individual interests, which are linked to

universal human rights, and traditional, collective interests, which are linked to specific communities;

(iii) **Conservative cultural identity.** Women's active participation in social, economic and political life is not recognized; cultural outlooks are used to give women sole responsibility for certain areas, such as the conservation and management of natural resources;

(b) In relation to representation and innovation

(i) **Scale of effective participation.** It is not clear that, by altering power structures and promoting more broad-based social participation and decision-making, social movements can succeed in systematically integrating groups and stakeholders that have different types of difficulties in expressing themselves and mobilizing;

(ii) **Innovations and loss of power and control.** Innovations in production processes and in economic initiatives cannot be assumed to be neutral generators of benefits for women; what is more, they can cause women to lose power and control, not only or primarily in production processes, but also in terms of economic benefits.

C. Inter-agency coordination and public policies

1. Linkages between indigenous women's organizations and external entities

38. Beyond possible isolated examples of formal coordination mechanisms and opportunities, do indigenous women's organizations show a capacity for engagement and initiative? Do external entities — such as the State, NGOs and women's organizations and movements — understand and support the positions of indigenous women? How? Are there any signs pointing to the construction of joint intercultural networks and a common political platform?

39. An attempt was made to sketch an initial outline of this external institutional environment, using the categories described below.

(a) Municipal associations

40. There are municipal associations of various types in the five countries studied and, specifically, organizations working to increase women's political participation at the local level. These entities may be national in scope (Bolivia, Ecuador and Guatemala), or they may cover only certain regions or departments of a country (Colombia, Peru).[9]

41. These entities may support women's participation in municipal public administration (through training, technical and legal advice, exchanges of experiences, defence of their rights and opening of opportunities). However, their agendas show no clear signs of being specifically geared to indigenous women.

[9] See boxes in the original document.

(b) Women's networks and NGOs

42. There is a broad spectrum of entities in the five countries whose work relates to women and the gender dimension. However, it is possible to identify certain common areas of interest in all five countries: the origins and extent of representation and legitimacy; financial intermediation and flows of monetary resources; recognition, belonging and shared or conflicting identities; recognition of the other as a "client", "beneficiary" or interlocutor, as either a peer or an unequal partner; ways of setting and developing priorities on their agendas; and engagement with or negation of the State and public policies, among others.

(c) Public institutions

43. Executive branch agencies assigned to indigenous and gender issues not only show few signs of internal coordination; they also, in relation to the issues under consideration, have a larger difficulty: forging links with policymaking bodies responsible for decentralization and municipalization, parliamentary commissions that address these same issues, decentralized public entities, and development funds, programmes and projects. In this regard, "mainstreaming" can become a trap, since it requires interaction with a complex web of stakeholders that is very hard to navigate.

(d) Research, documentation and training centres

44. In the five countries, there is an interesting critical mass of research and training centres and programmes; documentation centres and libraries; universities with relevant programmes of study and postgraduate programmes; NGOs working in applied research; and communications entities which, in various forms and with various emphases, deal with these issues.

2. Regulatory framework, policies and programmes geared to facilitating indigenous women's participation: some examples

45. This section presents a brief overview, starting with legislative initiatives that form a potentially enabling regulatory framework, then giving some examples of the application of public policies to strategic issues and finally highlighting some specific experiences of development programmes and projects.

Elements of an enabling regulatory framework

46. Below are some elements of a legal framework that can facilitate greater consideration of the rights and participation of indigenous women. The premise is that it is necessary to develop a synergy among regulations that differ in nature, purpose and scope, thereby taking action simultaneously on various fronts. Accordingly, the study sought to identify regulations related to:

(a) Recognition and rights of indigenous peoples;

(b) Exercise of citizenship and political rights, also taking into account the context of decentralization, municipalization and local administration;

(c) Family and domestic violence;

(d) Sexual and reproductive rights;

(e) Education;

(f) Access to resources and assets essential to life (such as land), with emphasis on rural development.[10]

Selected examples of enabling policies

Education: towards multiculturalism

47. Indigenous people generally exhibit, in the five countries analysed, literacy and education shortfalls that are more serious than those afflicting non-indigenous population groups. Accordingly, it is recommended that education policies make targeted efforts towards the full inclusion of indigenous populations in primary education. Moreover, since indigenous women exhibit even worse problems of illiteracy and undereducation, it is recommended that both gender equity policies and education policies in the countries in question include targeted efforts to close these gaps.

Popular participation: a means of addressing decentralization and municipalization

48. The popular participation process that has been ongoing in Bolivia for over a decade has been studied in depth in its various facets, advances and setbacks. Massolo notes that "the central aim of the Popular Participation Act was to improve the participation of marginalized groups at the municipal level; ironically, however, this law hindered the election of women. With the redistribution of taxes and the administration of economic resources by municipalities, there was an increase in electoral competition for mayorships and municipal councillorships, which local leaders saw as real opportunities for participation. Women's chances of being elected to municipal office had been curtailed by the masculine logic of gaining political power, together with economic interests".

49. While the above observation holds true particularly in relation to the first municipal elections held after the Act's promulgation, it is somewhat reductive to equate this Act only with quotas for participation in local governments. In fact, this is a public policy whose long-term effect has been such that three subsequent administrations have been unable to repeal it, since it was gradually appropriated by local stakeholders and organizations themselves.

Equity plans: a public policy framework for women

50. In Guatemala, thanks in part to the support provided by UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to the Presidential Secretariat for Women, a National Policy for the Advancement and Development of Guatemalan Women was formulated, together with the Equal Opportunity Plan (2001-2006), which identified nine thematic areas: economic development; land and housing; education; comprehensive health care; violence against women; employment; legal equity; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; and socio-political participation.

51. The challenge in connection with these plans, which have also been formulated in the other countries considered in the study, lies in their implementation, which

[10] See table 17 of the original document.

requires sufficient political support, on the one hand, and copious resources, on the other; these two elements are not always available.

II. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

1. Strengths and weaknesses

52. This section presents the study's conclusions, grouped into two categories: strengths and weaknesses of the processes and experiences analysed, and lessons learned.

Table 1
Strengths and weaknesses of indigenous women's political and social participation

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
Positioning of indigenous issues on the international and national agendas.	Near-invisibility of the specific problems of indigenous women.
Visualization of the magnitude and diversity of indigenous peoples.	Inconsistencies and contradictions in census information.
	Insufficient disaggregation of gender in available data.
New approach to indigenous peoples not only in terms of traditional issues such as poverty, unmet basic needs and other indicators of need, but also in terms of highlighting their potential and strengths.	Poverty indicators continue to penalize the indigenous population, particularly indigenous women in rural areas.
	Underuse of the municipal gender equity index and its adaptation to specifically measure the equity ratio between indigenous women and indigenous men.
Existence of indigenous policy proposals aimed at democratizing governance and local governments.	Tension between the ways in which government and governance are conceived by States and the international community, on the one hand, and by indigenous peoples, on the other.
Exposure of the overt and covert forms of racism still prevalent in national societies and States.	
Greater autonomy with respect to support institutions and mentoring programmes.	Conservative positions of traditional indigenous organizations, which have a critical influence on women's opportunities for empowerment.

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
Indigenous peoples' greater capacity to exercise citizenship and ensure that their rights are respected.	Rigid dichotomy between specific collective rights and universal individual rights tends to penalize indigenous women.
Existence of women's demands in various dimensions (political, economic, social and cultural).	Ambiguous nature of indigenous women's gender demands: between external influences and difficulties in being understood in their true magnitude.
Affirmative action mechanisms such as quota laws and systems have opened up opportunities.	Opportunity has not translated into greater participation by indigenous women. Reductive view limited to the quantitative aspects of political participation. Lack of priority for appropriate mechanisms for information dissemination and capacity-building.
Local levels of government offer greater opportunities for indigenous peoples' participation.	These opportunities do not automatically lead to active participation by women. External and internal factors can become substantive barriers to indigenous women's more active, continuous and sustainable participation: (a) Influence of political parties and traditional corporatist forms of access; (b) Political violence and social conflict at the local and national levels; (c) Weaknesses of social organizations and movements; (d) Weaknesses of multidisciplinary networks and platforms; (e) Undocumented status; (f) Illiteracy or low levels of formal education;

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
	(g) Insufficient access to information;
	(h) Isolation;
	(i) Insufficient access to and control of various assets (human, social, physical, financial and natural);
	(j) Family and domestic violence;
	(k) Practices and customs that infringe basic human rights;
	(l) Conservative cultural identity;
	(m) Authoritarian ways of exercising power.
Emergence and strengthening of many indigenous peoples' organizations at the local, national and international levels.	Assignment of women to lower-level posts related to their traditional roles.
Progressively greater participation of certain women leaders in these organizations.	Merely relative autonomy of indigenous women's organizations.
	Some dependence on external support institutions.
Indigenous women's formation of their own organizations at the local and national levels, more than the international level.	Indigenous women's difficulty in formulating their own agenda in the framework of a common agenda of indigenous demands and proposals.

53. The main conclusion is that it is not clear that indigenous movements and organizations can succeed in systematically integrating indigenous women by altering power structures and promoting more broad-based social participation and decision-making, since indigenous women still suffer from sharp disparities with regard to equal opportunity.

Table 2
Strengths and weaknesses in inter-agency coordination and public policies

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
Presence of a wide-ranging institutional environment with agendas linked to governance and local governments, and also indigenous issues.	Low levels of inter-agency coordination.
	In some cases, competition for resources.

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
Emergence of municipal associations and organizations geared to strengthening women's participation in local government. Formation of civic organizations that can promote participation by the local population.	There is no clear evidence that women's municipal associations or civic organizations have broken new ground or led to substantive, broad-based improvements in the opportunities and leadership of indigenous women mayors and councillors.
Long history and national and international recognition of NGOs and networks linked to the feminist and women's movement, international agendas and external cooperation.	Evidence that these NGOs and networks are somewhat distanced from women's and indigenous peoples' organizations, especially when the latter are of an organic nature, have a long history and belong to social movements geared to reclaiming rights.
Orientation of many of these entities towards the opening of more opportunities for women's democratic participation. Capacity to exert political pressure and influence at various levels. Availability of methods and tools for raising awareness and providing gender training, which, recently, have been enriched by instruments related to local coordination, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, etc.	Both male and female authorities tend to ask the following questions of women's organizations: (a) Whom do they represent and what gives them a legitimate right to speak and act on behalf of the working classes, indigenous women, subsistence farmers, etc.? (b) Why do they consist mainly of women, focus on women and work with women? Is this what the gender perspective means? (c) How can they relate to indigenous women if they consist of upper-middle-class white women? (d) Why not transfer resources directly from the State and international cooperation to legitimate grass-roots organizations? (e) Why do they have to provide training in how to identify the highest-priority, most strategic demands?
Emergence and development of public entities specializing in gender and ethnicity.	Low levels of coordination between specialized public agencies.

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
Formulation of certain public policies that take these dimensions into account more or less specifically.	Centralized nature of policymaking entities in the areas of gender and indigenous peoples.
	Little consistency between the positions of policymaking entities and programmes and projects dealing with the same issues/dimensions.
	Weaknesses and interruptions in institutional continuity.
	Difficulties in achieving ethnic and gender mainstreaming.
	Imposition, by assistance-oriented initiatives linked to first ladies' cabinets and offices, of a generalized concept of women and indigenous peoples as vulnerable population groups.
Interesting critical mass of research and training centres and programmes.	Substantial separation between gender studies and ethnic studies, and between those studies and decentralization studies.
	Widespread emphasis on research of an anthropological and ethnographic/ ethnological nature, with little attention to the economic and territorial dimension.
	Distance from public agencies in charge of official information sources.
	Weak channels of communication with indigenous women and populations.
Existence (variable) of a body of laws and rules, varying in nature, purpose and scope, that can lead to public policies and investments that are favourable to indigenous peoples and, in some cases, to indigenous women.	In some countries, the "political correctness" of laws and policies contrasts not only with their low levels of actual implementation, but also with the low priority attached by States to indigenous issues.
	Little progress in interlinking proactive public policies that cover different dimensions of indigenous and gender issues. Indigenous peoples and women are no longer regarded as active subjects, but as vulnerable beneficiaries.

54. There is a broad and diversified institutional environment that can represent an opportunity for increasing indigenous women's participation and providing more appropriate systemic responses to their demands in terms of public policies and investments.

55. However, in order for this to be feasible, a number of conditions must be met. The first is that indigenous women and their organizations must increase their capacity to engage in dialogue and design their own agendas. The second is that external entities must be permeable, flexible and open enough to allow for genuinely horizontal, democratic and non-discriminatory processes of dialogue.

2. Lessons learned

56. The lessons learned are grouped under four dimensions.

(a) A focus on small-scale initiatives that can be broadened

57. The political circumstances and the new social environments in the countries studied, many of which have been influenced by social and indigenous movements, mean that any initiative — large-scale, political and replicable — geared to increasing indigenous women's participation, especially at the local level, must involve active engagement with these forces and the negotiation of a shared agenda.

58. One alternative is to focus on small-scale initiatives, based on sound selection and comparability criteria, that are interlinked and that can, at a subsequent stage, be substantially scaled up on the basis of the knowledge gained and the results actually achieved. A programme's parameters will not limit its future expansion as long as there is a capacity to innovate, systematize the experience and learn from it.

(b) Facilitating and monitoring different initiatives with different women and men

59. Women can hardly be considered a homogeneous group, and this is all the more true in the case of women belonging to indigenous peoples with very different origins, territorial locations, identities and histories. Given this diverse mosaic, a key requirement is the capacity to recognize and bridge these differences, while not homogenizing the women involved or the initiatives in which they participate.

60. In this regard, experience shows that, while any programme must be flexible, it must above all define its approaches, actions and methods on the basis of close engagement with the women it is intended to serve. This should be a process of dialogue, not of responding automatically to any and every demand. What is important is the capacity for dialogue and collaboration in defining initiatives, not the imposition of ideas based on so-called higher principles.

(c) Empowering indigenous women and girls at the grass-roots level

61. Women's participation and organizational strength in communities, women's associations and other local organizations do not automatically give women access to political posts at the local government level, let alone posts in the national executive and legislative branches. This is even more true in the case of indigenous women, for whom a series of factors both internal and external to their environment and to the people to which they belong exert a powerful negative influence.

62. Few political empowerment initiatives focus on "ordinary" women: those who contend with assistance-based initiatives, whose first priority is finding ways to meet their basic needs, who are interested in economic ventures, who lack something as simple as an identity document so that they can at least be recognized as citizens. For the purpose of increasing and renewing the quality and extent of participation and leadership, and strengthening new generations that can achieve substantive change vis-à-vis their mothers' generation, it is necessary to tap the enormous potential of young indigenous women.

(d) The urgency of innovation

63. Experience has shown that the proposals on gender issues being put forward at various levels tend to be repetitive, slow to adapt and based on expediency. This can be observed among women who are feminists, researchers or politicians, on the one hand, and among working-class women (both indigenous and non-indigenous), on the other. It is not unusual to hear such women make statements along the lines of "Miss, I'll come for just one day of training; that won't be so bad".

64. There appear to be several areas in which it is urgent to innovate with respect to approaches and instruments, considering that traditional, isolated awareness-raising and training activities based on courses, workshops and quasi-academic events, and also those that use broadly defined mass education methodologies, are becoming less and less relevant. Moreover, assistance-based approaches are self-perpetuating and reproduce the parameters of "hard-core poverty". Experiences in competing for resources and co-financing initiatives of truly local interest have helped the beneficiaries to take ownership of those initiatives, to gradually make them sustainable and replicable and to achieve a sense of dignity that is lacking when beneficiaries merely receive donations. Lastly, participatory tools (municipal development plans, participatory budgets, negotiation tables, development councils, the raising of "genuine" demands, among many other instruments that have multiplied along with local governments) end up becoming the "business" of consultants and project operators if those involved lose sight of their original purpose: popular mobilization, the effective exercise of rights and citizen oversight of resources of all types.

B. Recommendations

65. **Based on the review of outcomes, the summary of strengths and weaknesses and the lessons learned, below is a limited set of recommendations intended to be practical, specific and scaled to what could become a project similar to the one being implemented by INSTRAW.**

1. Future areas of research

66. **Before the issue of possible areas of research is addressed, it is recommended that INSTRAW forge linkages with various entities that promote or directly conduct research on similar or complementary topics. Below are only a few examples, at both the national and Latin American levels:**

(a) **The programme "Decentralization and women's human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean".[11] With support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), this programme is implemented by the Gender, Society and Policy Area of the Argentine office of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and involves the following studies:**

(i) **Bolivia: "The tension between collective and individual rights and gender relations in a context of cultural diversity. Effects of the decentralization process" (agency: Promotores Agropecuarios (Agricultural Advocates));**

(ii) **Ecuador: "Women as social and political subjects in local governance and decentralization projects in Ecuador";**

(iii) **El Salvador: "Contributions to decentralization and democratic governance: female municipal stakeholders and local and national mechanisms for gender equity in El Salvador and Honduras" (agency: Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo (National Development Foundation));**

(iv) **Paraguay: "Decentralization of health care in Paraguay. A contribution towards gender equality?" (agency: Centro de Documentación y Estudios (Documentation and Study Centre));**

(b) **The Women and Development Unit of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which is carrying out comparative studies in the region on ethnicity and gender;**

(c) **At the national level, entities such as the Programa de Investigación Estratégica de Bolivia (Strategic Research Programme of Bolivia), the Instituto de Estudios Ecuatorianos (Institute of Ecuadorian Studies), the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (Institute of Peruvian Studies), the Fundación Foro Nacional por Colombia (National Forum for Colombia Foundation) and the more recent Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones para el Desarrollo y la Paz (Research and Study Centre for Development and Peace) in Guatemala, all of which have undertaken research on both subject areas in relation to poverty and decentralization;**

(d) **At the regional level, entities such as the Latin American Centre for Rural Development, which has addressed, from the perspective of applied research, some dimensions that could complement those addressed by INSTRAW, such as social movements, governance and rural territorial development, and development and poverty reduction strategies in national and regional contexts, among others;**

(e) **At the national and regional levels, opportunities for cooperation with statistical institutes in order to progress in the generation of reliable comparative information on indigenous peoples, add.ng specific requirements in terms of disaggregation by gender.**

67. **INSTRAW could establish a small fund for the systematization of experiences in governance and local government with a gender perspective. One experience that could be analysed and adapted in this regard is that of the**

[11] See http://www.prigepp.org/site/concurso.asp.

Chorlaví Group's Mink'a Fund, for which the Latin American Centre for Rural Development serves as technical and coordination secretariat and which receives funding from Canada's IDRC and the Netherlands' Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO).

68. **In addition, it is recommended that INSTRAW conduct brief studies on topics such as:**

(a) **Private life and public administration: Indigenous women and men in cities and the countryside;**

(b) **Historical trends in indigenous participation in local governments. Quantitative study complemented by an analysis of enabling factors and obstacles, both internal and external, including social and institutional networks;**

(c) **Political participation and public administration with an indigenous face: effects on territorial development.**

2. **Capacity-building for indigenous women**

69. **INSTRAW could develop active coordination with national and international institutions working to provide all indigenous women with identity cards and other basic documentation.**

70. **It is recommended that INSTRAW implement innovative and validated methods of capacity-building geared to young indigenous women and men. Specific suggestions in this regard include:**

(a) **Development of channels of horizontal exchange and internships similar to those being implemented under the project on governance and sustainable living strategies in indigenous rural municipalities;**

(b) **Organization of municipal and regional knowledge fairs to spread awareness of research on the issue and to disseminate its findings, as well as systematizations of indigenous peoples' and indigenous women's own experiences;**

(c) **Organization of public political debates from the local to the national level highlighting the advances and results of the effort to increase indigenous women's participation.**

71. **In all the above-mentioned areas, efforts should be made to seek co-financing, co-sponsorship and involvement, depending on the case in question and specific opportunities, by the national public entities concerned with ethnic, gender, decentralization and sustainable development issues; decentralized entities; municipalities and local civic associations and organizations; and NGOs, networks and other interested private institutions.**